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WASHINGTON

March 18, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

From: Alexander M. Haig, Jr. 

Subject: Strategy in Southern Africa

The situation in Southern Africa requires urgent action on two issues: 1) whether we should continue to support the UN-sponsored negotiations for the independence of Namibia; 2) how to curtail Soviet influence in Angola, manifested by the Cuban troops there.

Our actions should be governed by our overall strategic objectives: to resist and reduce Soviet, Cuban and local Marxist influence; to strengthen our relations with all states, ensuring our access to critical minerals and markets; to pursue policies in cooperation with our allies (the Contact Group) whose African interests are more substantial than our own; to avoid total identification with South African racial policies and a political rupture with black Africa.

Frankly, the Namibia and Angola issues pose a thorny problem for us. In an ideal world, it might be preferable to stand aside and let the pot simmer. But the long history of Western diplomatic involvement on Namibia and the substantial concerns of our key allies require that we adopt a damage limiting strategy. We are in something of a box. Our approach needs to get us out without a costly rupture in our allied and African relations.

In pursuit of these objectives we should do the following:

-- Support efforts of the UN, the Contact Group and the so-called Frontline states to arrange Namibian independence, but argue that internationally supervised elections in Namibia should await the creation of a constitution that specifies minority rights, protection of private property and neutrality (the latter with an international guarantee).

State Dept. review completed

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-- Strengthen Jonas Savimbi and his UNITA group through public support [redacted] so that he can harass the Cubans in Angola, as part of a broader strategy of pressing the MPLA into dealing with Savimbi and getting rid of the Cubans.

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These tactics will enable us to address our deepest concerns: the Soviet presence in Angola and the possibility of a Soviet dominated Marxist state in Namibia. This should enable us to restore South Africa's sense of confidence in us and to persuade Pretoria to cooperate with us in facilitating the emergence of an independent Namibia not dominated by the Soviet Union. Simultaneously, we shall be able to argue to the black African states that our influence with South Africa on the Namibia issue will be more effective if they can persuade the Angolan Government to phase out Cuban "assistance." Harassed on the ground by Savimbi and under pressure from other African states, the MPLA government in Angola may reassess the costs and consequences of the Cuban presence and Soviet patronage.

Among the virtues of the proposed approach is that we may be able to avoid a major strain on our relations with key European allies or friendly black African states at a delicate moment for our overall diplomatic objectives. Moreover, the entire process can be launched without much fanfare and takes advantage of the inertia left over from previous efforts. An immediate advantage will be to delay a test of strength in the U.N. over sanctions, a battle that would benefit only Moscow. The most important benefit, however, is that these actions may enable us to improve our relations with the black Africans and South Africans while simultaneously hampering the Cubans and Soviets.

We are also on firm ground in our insistence that the constitution-making exercises be a prelude to independence, as it was in Zimbabwe/Rhodesia. The United States would take a stand for Namibian independence but an independence marked by democratic institutions, not simply a one-time vote. The constitutional issues are fairly few in number, so the exercise itself, while it means further delay, is not an interminable process.

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Recommendation:

That you approve the strategy outlined above and sketched in more detail in the attachment to this memorandum. Our approach is safeguarded, so that we can, if necessary, reappraise the situation in which case I will come back to you to consider our alternatives.

Approve \_\_\_\_\_

Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_

Attachment:

As stated.

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**SECRET**Scenario of U.S. Strategy in Angola/NamibiaI. Initial Moves

A. Indicate to allies in Contact Group US intention to pursue Namibia negotiations and US desire that CG continue to work with us in exploring the "remaining issues" (Time: Now). We are therefore sending a senior emissary to the area.

-- In early April (to head off a UN test of strength) send senior emissary to talk with South Africa, Frontline states, and CG (in that order) to outline our key ideas in Namibia:

- inform South Africa that we intend to address the issue of Cuban presence in Angola and danger of a Marxist take over in Namibia in expectation of their co-operation in moving to settle Namibia within 18-24 months.
- retain existing elements of UN plan, but demand insertion of a democratic constitutional requirement prior to elections, with equal opportunity for SWAPO and internal Namibian parties to state their views before a "neutral" constitutional commissioner acceptable to us. The commissioner would write the constitution according to key criteria acceptable to us on: the rights of minorities, guarantees on property rights, and an international guaranty of Namibia's neutrality (e.g. no foreign troops).
- inform Frontline states that our influence with South Africa depends in part on this constitutional issue (minority protection and guarantees) and can be improved if there is movement toward Cuban withdrawal from Angola.
- issue high-level public declaration (in launching our consultations prior to Savimbi visit) of US serious commitment to internationally-recognized independence for Namibia and our intention to move the stalled negotiations forward now.

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B. Signal to Savimbi to come to Washington for policy level discussions of his aims, plans and needs (in early April). Determine nature and level of US assistance.

-- Use press guidance at time of Savimbi visit indicating that Savimbi is a bona fide nationalist seeking genuine independence for his country, and making clear that US relations with Angola are out of the question while Cuban troops remain in Angola.

-- Signal the MPLA (before Savimbi visit) our preconditions for a normal relationship with Angola, and invite them to send an emissary to US to present their ideas. If they take us up, time after Savimbi visit.

C. Couple our existing invitation to South African Foreign Minister with one to his Nigerian counterpart to visit Washington for high-level consultations. This gesture is essential to indicate US commitment to deal in serious and balanced way with regional problems.

Safeguards and Alternatives:

- 1) we will of course veto sanctions against South Africa in UN if Africans press the issue.
- 2) make clear to South Africa we are firm in our desire for progress on Namibia; they should not complicate our task by regional adventures that help Moscow's position or "complicate" the goal of Cuban withdrawal.
- 3) tell Africans they will not get an independent Namibia without us. Unless they play ball on pressing the MPLA and keep SWAPO in the Namibia talks, we will have no leverage on the South Africans.
- 4) we disengage diplomatically if there is no prospect of movement, leaving the parties to their military options or possible direct (SA-Angola) talks. Continue to assure adequate support to assure gradually heightened military pressure on Cubans and MPLA.

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## II. Follow on Moves

A. If there is movement as pressure grows on MPLA, add additional carrots to open rifts in leadership:

- suggest US logistic/financial support of an African force to replace Cubans in MPLA-controlled territory.
- promise to stop South African raids on Angola if MPLA curtails SWAPO military activity.
- Use enhanced food aid and other carrots with Angola and Zambia, the SWAPO hosts, in effort to scale down level of Namibia fighting.

B. Begin Namibia constitutional exercise (and seek incorporation of it in UN plan context as important new element of a package settlement, internationally guaranteed).

- Develop strong public posture supporting Namibia independence linked to concept of a genuinely democratic constitution with safeguards for minorities, checks against seizure of minority interests, and an international or 5-power guaranty of Namibia's status (e.g. no foreign troops).

### Safeguards and Alternatives:

- assuming Namibia talks can go forward (Africans play ball), resist imposition of deadlines on negotiating process, making clear privately to Africans we are dead serious about the need for Cuban withdrawals as an element of overall regional settlement.
- stand behind South African retention of Walvis Bay unless and until the SAG itself decides to divest itself of this position.
- tell SAG we will not accept indefinite delaying tactics on Namibia if there is movement in Angola, and make clear there is a firm limit to our willingness to support their foot-dragging on procedural or technical issues.

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- threaten all parties with US disengagement from the issues.
- Guarantees: the concept of external guarantees behind the constitution will require careful handling. A formal Western defense commitment is not envisaged. But we (US plus allies) would sign a constitutional document indicating our endorsement of it. Standing behind the document would be South African presence at Walvis Bay as a deterrent to unacceptable alternations of the accords, and the Namibian government's extreme dependence on Western and South African assistance, investment and trade. Presumably the constitution would also receive UN endorsement.